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ABSTRACT

This guide describes ways that parents can help improve student achievement and school quality. It answers such questions as how to choose the right early-education opportunity for a preschooler, how to make sure a 5-year-old is ready for school, how to help a daughter do well in school, how to work with a daughter's or son's teachers, how to help a preteen develop strong values and character, how to help a teenager resist negative peer pressure, and how to be a strong role model for children. The guide discusses the need for parents to be engaged in their children's education and suggests four key roles for parents: create a home environment that promotes learning; provide extra services and support to students; work to make the system more responsive to all families; and serve on school committees and actively participate in efforts to improve school quality. The text also provides tips for helping children to become readers, grouping these suggestions by the age of the children. It discusses ways to motivate children to learn mathematics, such as using math to solve everyday problems, and offers suggestions for making schools safe so that all children can learn in a nonthreatening culture. (RJM)

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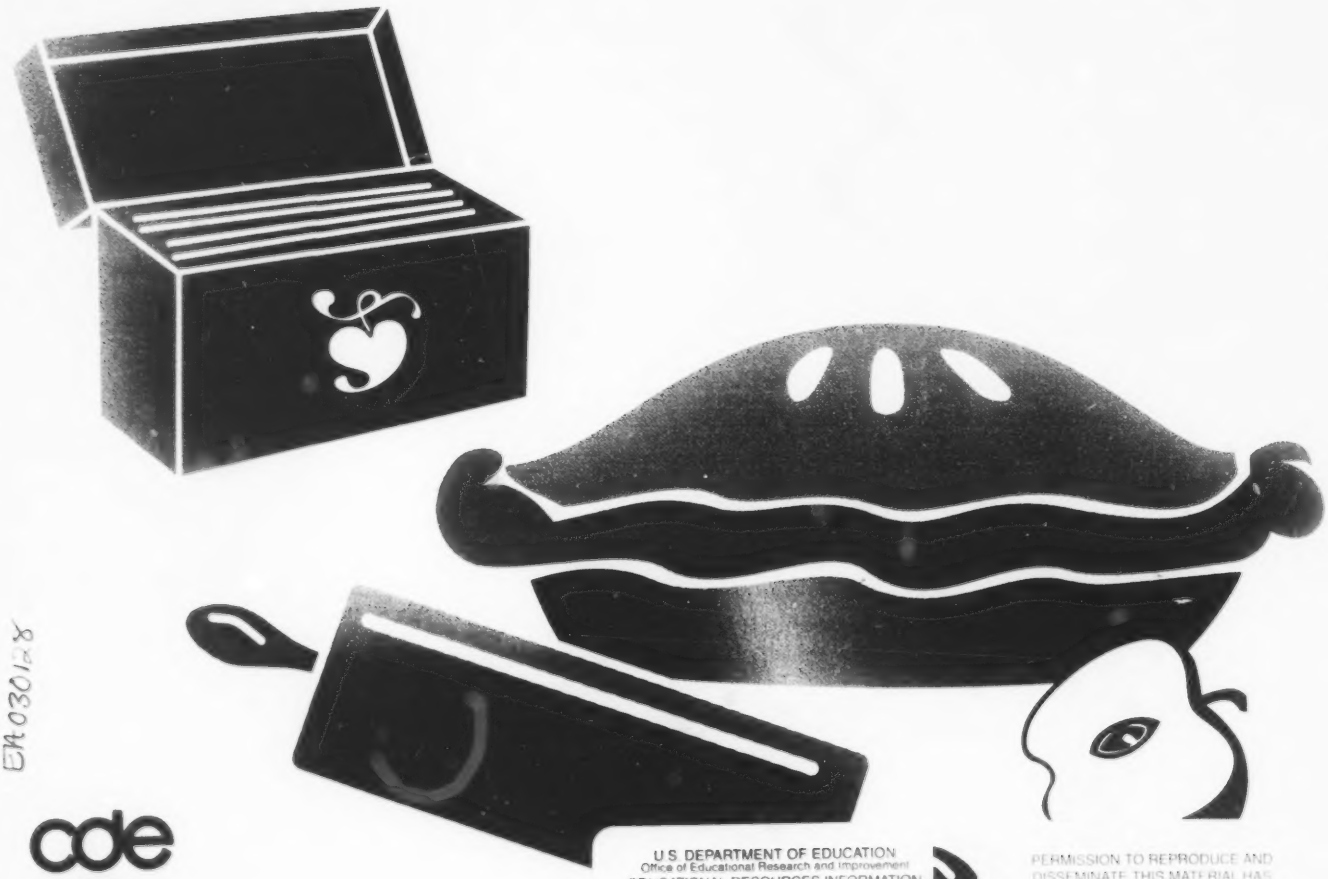
Recipe for Success

An Updated Parents' Guide to Improving Colorado Schools and Student Achievement



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INTRODUCTION

Recipe for Success is a guide to help parents improve student achievement and school quality. The ingredients you'll find in these recipes will help you answer questions like:

- ✓ How do I choose the right early education opportunity for my preschooler?
- ✓ How can I make sure my five-year-old is ready for school?
- ✓ How can I help my daughter do well in school?
- ✓ How can I work with and help my son's teachers?
- ✓ How can I help my preteen develop strong values and character?
- ✓ How can I help my teenager resist negative peer pressure?
- ✓ How can I be a strong role model for my children and teens?

You and the school are partners. Caring, dedicated teachers can do only so much without parents' help. Teachers need your involvement. Because they want your children to succeed as much as you do, they will welcome your interest. They want you to ask good, hard questions and demand quality.

Most of all, just *be there* for your children. Share their joys. Respect their concerns. Understand their needs. Your unconditional support will go a long way toward giving your children confidence to tackle whatever life presents.

Remember that *you* are your children's most important teacher. Even your smallest effort improves their future — and ultimately improves the future for us all.

If you'd like to get together with other parents and "cook up" more recipes for helping your children succeed in school, we'd be happy to conduct a special session through your local school, your congregation, or even your home. We'll bring tons of great ideas and handouts you can take home and use later.

To set up a Recipe for Success session, call the Colorado Department of Education at 303 866 6974 or Denver Public Schools 303 764 3249.

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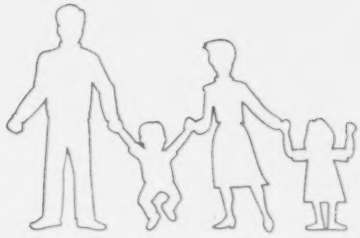
Engaged Parents  4

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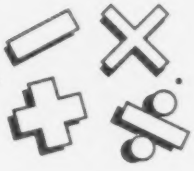
Math Motivation.  8

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Healthy, Curious Kids

Getting Off to a Good Start . . .

If you are seeking early education (day care or preschool), take the time to choose a high-quality provider, using this checklist:

- ✓ Is the provider licensed? Is it accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children?
- ✓ Is the atmosphere respectful and affectionate? Do the adults appear to enjoy working with children? Do the kids seem happy?
- ✓ Is the facility clean, well-lighted, and safe? Are toys and equipment appropriate? Are snacks and meals nutritious? Is there a plan for emergencies? Are drop-in visits from parents allowed and encouraged?
- ✓ Does the program provide a wide range of learning activities to meet each child's needs and interests?
- ✓ Are enough adults present to give individual attention to every child?

First things first. Science tells us that a child's education begins at birth, and that means parents are a child's first and most important teachers. Schools can't do their jobs effectively unless parents make sure — from the day their children are born — that their kids enter kindergarten ready to learn.

Children who start school with a lack of interest in learning, with health problems, or with limited speech and language skills face a much greater risk of failure than other youngsters. Research shows such kids are more than twice as likely to fall behind, to have to repeat a grade, to require remedial instruction, and to drop out of school by the ninth or tenth grades.

Parents must make sure their children enter school physically healthy and prepared for learning. Children must know their address and phone number, how to tie their shoes, and other basic skills. And just as important, children must have habits and attitudes that help them succeed in school: patience, the desire to learn, and confidence in their ability to learn.

For working parents and others who rely on early education outside the home, it is important to pay attention to the quality of care a provider offers, not just to the provider's cost and convenience.

On the next page, you'll find some suggestions for making sure that your child gets off to a good start in school — healthy, confident, and ready to learn.

A Child's Progress from Birth to Kindergarten

0-6 Months: Critical period for developing vision. Absorb sounds of language.

6 Months - 1 Year: Play with their fingers and toes; know their names, begin to babble, develop early language. Begin to become self-aware.

1-2 Years: Begin to develop motor skills, imitate sounds and actions of others. Self-centered, beginning to learn independence ("No!"). Know about 250 words, understand many more.

2-3 Years: Time for toilet training. More aware of self and others; enjoy other children. Growing vocabulary, begin to speak in sentences.

3-4 Years: Can dress without help (except for buttons and shoelaces). Enjoy pretending. May have fears and imaginary companions. Speak in complete sentences. Ready to use pencil, crayons. Can learn to take turns.

4-5 Years: Growing attention span; enjoy group activities. Great energy, improving physical coordination. Imaginative, love rhyming, jokes, nonsense words.

Source: Helping Your Child Get Ready for School, US Department of Education. Office of Education Research and Improvement, 1993.

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WHAT YOU CAN DO

- ✓ Make sure your child receives all essential shots and regularly visits the doctor and dentist.
- ✓ Give your child positive reinforcement for good behavior and work well done. It's always more effective to praise good actions than punish bad ones.
- ✓ Learn when your child is ready to acquire new skills. For instance, wait until your child is at least 2 to begin toilet training — younger children lack the physical control to cooperate.
- ✓ Try to see your child's behavior from a developmental viewpoint. Very young children cannot grasp concepts like sharing and waiting. Teach them how to get along when they are ready to understand.
- ✓ Correct misbehavior gently, without anger. Often a temper tantrum comes from an inability to communicate urgent needs as the child perceives them.
- ✓ Read to or with your child at least 20 minutes every day. Children who are consistently exposed to reading at home do much better in school. Add to your child's enjoyment by discussing the books you read together.
- ✓ Tell your child family stories. Hearing about family history and your own experiences helps children learn to appreciate language, storytelling, and the past.
- ✓ Play with your child. Ask questions about what your child is seeing, touching, and thinking.
- ✓ Involve yourself in your child's life. Listen to, laugh with, support, discipline, and comfort your child as appropriate.
- ✓ Provide a safe, secure home environment, because children who grow up with abuse and violence have difficulty concentrating on school work and are more likely to become violent themselves.

HOW TO LEARN MORE

To obtain a free copy of "Staying on Track as Your Child Grows and Learns," a brochure on age-appropriate behavior, write to Denise Chelius at the Colorado Department of Education, 201 East Colfax Avenue, Denver, CO 80203 or call her at 303 866 6710.

The 4Parents Helpline, a program of the Work and Family Resource Center of the Community. College of Denver, provides confidential assistance to parents. Call 800 288 3444 (in Metro Denver, 303 620 4444) 8-8 Monday-Thursday, 8-5 Friday.

The Colorado Resource and Referral Agency provides information about licensed child care centers. Call Child Care Aware at 800 424 2246 for the agency nearest you and a free copy of "Five Steps to Finding Quality Child Care."

The Colorado Department of Human Services Child Care Unit provides access to the records of any licensed child-care facility, including complaints filed by parents. Call 303 866 5088 to schedule an appointment.

Engaged Parents

For parents, making sure youngsters enter kindergarten ready to learn is just the first step. Staying involved in their education, both at home and at school, requires time, energy, and sustained commitment.

Be visible at your child's school. Schools welcome your involvement because parents can serve as caring role models for all children, not just their own. Visiting school also benefits your child directly: just "showing up" as often as you can brings you and your child's teachers together as partners in your child's success.

A report by the National Committee for Citizens in Education suggests four key roles for parents:

- ✓ As teachers, parents can create a home environment that promotes learning, reinforces what is being taught at school, and develops the values and skills children need to become responsible adults.
- ✓ As supporters, parents can contribute their knowledge and skills to the school, providing extra services and support to students.
- ✓ As advocates, parents can work to make the system more responsive to all families.
- ✓ As decision-makers, parents can serve on school committees and actively participate in efforts to improve school quality and student achievement.

So get involved. Participate in school events, develop a working relationship with your child's teachers, and keep up with what is happening at school. When you do, your child will be better able to handle life's transitions, keep up in school, and develop realistic plans for the future.

How Much Homework is Enough?

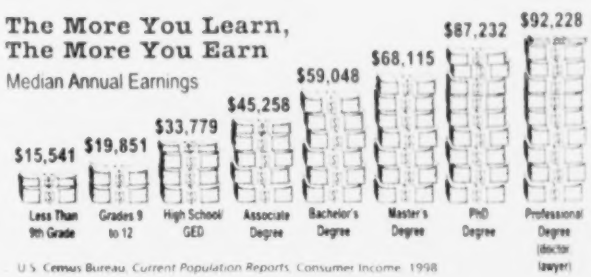
There is no "correct" amount of homework. However, many school districts recommend 15 to 45 minutes a day for grades 3 to 6, 45 to 75 minutes a day for grades 7 to 9, and 75 to 120 minutes for grades 10 to 12.

Your Involvement Counts!

The National PTA tells us that when parents are involved with their children's schools:

- ☻ students at all grade levels achieve more, regardless of economic or social status
- ☻ students exhibit more positive attitudes and behaviors
- ☻ students are less likely to use drugs or alcohol or become violent or anti-social
- ☻ more students graduate and go on to further education
- ☻ teachers expect more of students whose parents collaborate with them

Sometimes young people are in a hurry to leave school and find a job. They think getting an education is just a waste of time. But that attitude can cost them, big time! Here are some statistics on the real earning power of education:



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WHAT YOU CAN DO

- ✓ Be sure your child has a quiet, well-lighted place to study and read.
- ✓ Understand your child's learning style. Does he or she learn best by seeing, hearing, or touching? For instance, a child who is primarily a visual learner may need pictures to fully understand the concepts in a textbook. Or an auditory learner may learn best when texts are read aloud.
- ✓ Set limits on the time your child watches TV and plays video games — one hour a day is plenty! Make sure the programs and games are appropriate to your child's age and reflect the values you want to teach.
- ✓ Keep books, magazines, and newspapers in the house. Show your child that you enjoy learning new things and discussing new ideas. Help your child get a personal library card.
- ✓ Show an interest in what your child is learning in school. Know what kind of homework the teachers expect — and make sure your child completes it. Be positive and encouraging about the importance of homework.
- ✓ Know when report cards are due. This is the way schools help you be informed about your child's progress. Discuss the report card with your child, and praise his or her achievements.
- ✓ Attend parent-teacher conferences. Ask questions when you don't understand what or how well your child is learning. If you are concerned about your child's progress, ask the teacher to send home a weekly progress report with information about grades, attendance, and behavior.
- ✓ Demonstrate to your child how to be a responsible citizen. Vote in local, state, and national elections, participate in community activities, and organize a neighborhood volunteer effort you and your child can participate in together.
- ✓ Avoid assigning blame. When parents blame teachers and teachers blame parents for a child's poor performance, nobody wins. Instead, acknowledge the problem and work together to solve it.
- ✓ Don't criticize your child's teacher in the child's presence. This makes children feel less responsible for their behavior.

HOW TO LEARN MORE

Ask the school secretary for the phone number of the Parent-Teacher Association nearest you, or contact the Colorado Parent-Teacher Association 303 420 7820.

Ask your local PTA to get a copy of "A Leader's Guide to Parent Involvement" for parents to share. The guide is available through the national PTA 312 670 6782, or on line at http://www.pta.org/programs/ldrsgde.htm. Also look for National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs, http://www.pta.org/programs/invstand.htm.

For ideas on how to strengthen the partnership between parents and school staff, contact Cindy Wakefield at the Colorado Department of Education 303 866 6750.

Internet Resources:

Akron Council of PTAs. Links to parenting sites.
http://home.neo.lrun.com/bricker/akronpta/parents.htm

ParentSoup. Online magazine for parents with special sections for pre-pregnancy, expectant parents, parents of babies, toddlers, and children up to teenagers. Chat, message boards, product recalls.
http://www.parentsoup.com; http://www.parentsoup.com/edcentral/

United States Department of Education. An education gold mine, with on-line versions of the outstanding *Help Your Child . . .* series (several are available in Spanish), and many other Department publications 1 800 USA LEARN
Plus Picks of the Month from education-affiliated Internet sites.
http://www.ed.gov/pubs/parents.htm

Readers All

Literacy — the ability to read and write — is critical to success in modern life. Children who read fluently learn more, think better, and have more self confidence. But literacy doesn't begin in school, it begins at birth!

From infancy to about age six, the child's brain is "programmed" to learn language, many scientists believe. That's why it is so important that you talk, sing, and read to your children and provide other rich learning experiences that help their young brains develop the connections for lifelong literacy.

If parents don't talk and read to their children during the early years — from the moment of birth onward — their children will miss once-in-a-lifetime opportunities to master language skills. By the time they enter school, language-deprived children are already behind and may never catch up with their classmates.

Children who speak more than one language have many advantages in our increasingly multilingual society. If yours is a bilingual family, take advantage of your child's capacity to learn both your native tongue and that of your adopted country. If you speak only one language at home, why not study a second language with your child? You'll both have fun learning — but don't be surprised when your child picks up the new language much faster than you do!

Literacy is one of the most priceless — yet least expensive — gifts we can bestow upon our kids. Reading to and with your child costs virtually nothing, but it provides incalculable benefits to you and your child alike.

Best of all, reading is *FUN!*

Building Vocabulary

For infants and toddlers:

- Point to objects and say their names
- Repeat words, using different tones and inflections
- Talk, sing, make silly noises to your baby
- Read and tell stories
- Say and point to your child's nose, mouth, ears, and so on

For elementary school children:

- Look up words in the dictionary
- Tell stories at dinner
- Use and explain new words

For middle and high schoolers:

- Play word games like crossword puzzles, anagrams, and Scrabble.
- Look up new words from newspapers, magazines, and books.
- Have everyone in the family learn a new word every day.
- Make up rhymes and puns.
- Talk about books you and your children have read.

TV Programs to Educate and Entertain

Arthur, Barney & Friends,
Bill Nye the Science Guy,
Kratts' Creatures, Magic School Bus,
Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood,
The Puzzle Place, Reading Rainbow,
Sesame Street, Shining Time Station,
Storytime, Theodore Tugboat, Tots TV,
Where in Time is Carmen Sandiego?,
Wishbone.

(Call your local PBS station for program listings.)

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WHAT YOU CAN DO

Infants

✓ Make eye contact, echo the baby's sounds, smile, talk, coo, sing, laugh with your baby.
✓ Provide moving objects like mobiles and windup toys to engage your baby's imagination.
✓ Talk about what you are doing as you bathe, feed, or dress your baby.
✓ Read simple stories with vivid, descriptive pictures. Try to do this 20 minutes every day, even with the youngest infants.

Toddlers

✓ Read to your child at least 20 minutes every day. Point to pictures and say the words the pictures describe.
✓ Name things you see around you: your child's toes, a ball, a dog, pictures on a cereal box. Encourage your child to repeat the words as you say them.
✓ Ask questions that make your child think: where are the stars? why do dogs bark?
✓ Show that writing tells you things. Point out writing on labels, road signs, stores.

Preschool

✓ Read to your child at least 20 minutes every day. Point to the words as you read. This will help your child understand the connection between spoken and printed language.
✓ Play word games that help your child understand concepts like opposites (big/little) or rhyming (house/mouse) and teach new words.
✓ Provide lots of paper and crayons for writing and drawing.
✓ Watch educational TV — Sesame Street and Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood are especially helpful for learning the alphabet and letter sounds.

Elementary School:

✓ Use the dictionary. Encourage your child to look up and understand the meanings of new words.
✓ Visit the library with your child, weekly if possible. Get your children their own library cards.
✓ Be a reader yourself. Seeing you enjoy reading encourages that same enjoyment in your child.
✓ When your child reads aloud, don't correct every error. NEVER use reading as punishment.

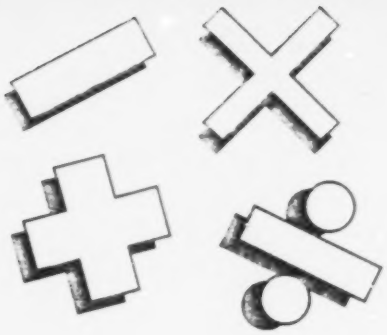
Middle and High School

✓ Turn off the TV, computer, and telephone for an hour a day. Let it be known that in your home, this time is reserved for homework and reading.
✓ Let your kids see you reading newspapers, magazines, and books for information and enjoyment. This sets an important example about the importance of reading to daily life.
✓ Give books and magazine subscriptions as gifts.
✓ Encourage your child to enroll in challenging classes that provide broad exposure to literature, history, and social sciences.

(Adapted in part from Colorado Children's Campaign BrainChild Project, *Helping Your Child Learn to Read*, U.S. Department of Education, 1993, and *Helping Your Child Get Ready for School*, U.S. Department of Education, 1996)

HOW TO LEARN MORE

Denver Public Schools Educational Services 303 764 3249
Eileen Moreli, Delessia Rucker, Literacy Curriculum Specialists, Denver Public Schools 303 764 3249
Success For All Programs, Johns Hopkins University, 3505 North Charles Street, Baltimore, MD 21218
410 516 8816
Raising Readers, a parents' program that provides skills and materials to promote parent-child interaction around literacy. Monterey Elementary School, Colorado Springs 719 579 2170
Parents as Teachers: The parent is the child's first and most important teacher. General information:
Monterey Elementary School, Colorado Springs 719 579 2170
Read/Write Connection: Maureen Auman 303 755 4567
Help Your Child Read and Succeed: A Parent Guide. Carl B. Smith. ERIC/ED Info Press. Indiana University.
PO Box 5953, Bloomington IN 47404
Read*Write*NOW 1 800 USA LEARN (US Department of Education)
Colorado Department of Education, Stevi Quate 303 866 6634
Celebrate Reading With Your Family! A Resource of the Family Education Network.
www.cde.state.co.us/sarb/public/parents.htm



Math Motivation

Math is so much a part of everyday life that we may forget how central it is to success in the world around us. From counting our change at the fast-food counter to launching an astronaut into space, the principles of mathematics are everywhere.

Mathematics is much, much broader than the addition, subtraction, division, and multiplication we all learned in elementary school — that's arithmetic, only a small part of the infinite world of mathematics. Mathematics incorporates numbers, shapes, patterns, estimation, and measurement — and the concepts that relate to them. Math teaches us to reason, to apply logic to problems and conflicts. A child who can think things through and reach logical conclusions is a person who stands a good chance of making sound choices in life.

That's why every child must have a solid foundation in math. No matter what course your child takes in life, math will be part of the equation. If your child becomes a carpenter, a grocery store checker, an interior designer, a physician, an engineer, or a chef, he or she will have to apply mathematical concepts at work — and in every aspect of life.

If your actions demonstrate that everyone can be good at math — women and men, girls and boys — your child will learn math more readily in school. On the other hand, if you express a dislike for math or claim "I'm no good at math," your child will probably absorb a negative attitude that will make it more difficult to learn essential math skills and concepts.

And don't worry about making mistakes — working through a tough math problem with your child demonstrates patience and problem-solving, important life skills your child needs.

Yes, math is sometimes hard. But learning math can also be fun and rewarding — like mastering a sport. Athletes struggle, sometimes fail, as they strive for each new level in their sport. But they keep trying and finally savor the thrill of victory. Mastering math is just like that — always challenging, often frustrating, but oh so satisfying when you "get it."

Should Students Use Calculators?

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics believes calculators reinforce learning. With calculators as tools, students can:

- ✓focus on the subject matter
- ✓solve problems faster
- ✓solve harder problems
- ✓explore related topics

Math in Today's World

"Math is essential in business...in making market predictions, preparing budgets or estimating a construction budget. Math is essential in the sciences and engineering. Consider medical careers, sales positions, technical jobs . . . [Modern math education will] help children think, reason, and solve problems. That's the kind of education that will prepare children for their future."

Marilyn Burns, *Math: Facing an American Phobia*, 1998

WHAT YOU CAN DO

✓Begin in early infancy by counting aloud your baby's fingers and toes.

✓Provide safe, educational toys for small children to develop their spatial sense — blocks, graduated measuring cups, objects that can be placed inside or on top of each other.

✓Do mental arithmetic with your child. Compute, for example, the 10% discount on new shoes or the number of 8-ounce glasses in a quart of milk.

✓Measure your child's height in inches, then convert the number to feet.

✓Play music and sing to your child. Exposure to music at any age helps to develop the mathematical areas of the brain.

✓Play family games, puzzles, and other activities that develop and use math skills. Good ones are Sorry, Hi-Ho Cherry-O, Yahtze, Monopoly, and card games.

✓Focus on how your child approaches a problem, not just on getting the right answer. Even though your child may have made an addition or multiplication error, give praise for understanding how to use the appropriate concept.

✓Use estimating to help a child grasp mathematical principles. For example, ask your child to estimate whether there's enough ice cream left to serve the entire family a cup each or approximately how much it will cost to take the whole family to a movie.

✓When solving word (logic) problems, use objects or draw a picture to help your child visualize the concepts. Break the problem into small pieces and tackle just one piece at a time.

✓Help your youngster reason through a math problem. Ask, is this like another problem? Would it help to draw a diagram? Is there another way to look at this? Do you see a pattern?

✓Let your child see you enjoy math as you solve everyday problems like figuring how much hamburger you'll need for the cookout. Demonstrate the value of persisting until you solve the problem. Have fun with the process!

✓Should your child use a calculator? Calculators are useful tools that speed the computation process. But to use a calculator, we must understand the underlying mathematics so we can judge whether the answer is reasonable.

✓Encourage your teen to enroll in challenging math classes like trigonometry and calculus. Not only do these courses develop critical thinking skills and logic, they may be required daily in careers in engineering and other sciences.

HOW TO LEARN MORE

For more information on family math in your area, contact:

Denver Public Schools Mathematics Curriculum Specialists: Glenn Bruckhart, Nancy Connor, Rosanne Fulton, Olive Ann Slotta, Kathi Wilson 303 764 3249

Ken Berry, Math TOSA, Jefferson County School District 303 982 6982

Sharon Simpson, Mentor Teacher, Cherry Creek Schools 303 371 0190

Alice Lopez, Western Hills Elementary, Mapleton 303 853 1429

Veronica Martel, Bertha Heid, Mapleton 303 853 1335

Loretta McLaughlin, Winter Park 970 726 4738 (call after 4 pm)

Marge Lindskog, Pueblo 719 545 2316

Safe Schools

If children are to thrive and succeed in school, they must have a safe, secure learning environment.

Thanks to the strong commitment of educators, parents, and communities, on a day-to-day basis, schools are among the safest places. But keeping our young people safe must be a community-wide effort. We must create school environments in which young people feel truly connected and in which we connect with every young person — especially those who are isolated and troubled.

A report by the Colorado Department of Education identifies five key components of safe schools:

- ✓ a clear sense of safety and discipline issues that have arisen or may arise at the school
- ✓ well-defined and widely understood policies and procedures for dealing with violations and infractions
- ✓ a code of conduct that clearly states expectations for students and adults
- ✓ programs and services for students and families in need of counseling and other forms of assistance and support
- ✓ opportunities for students to learn more, both in school and through community programs, about how to resolve disputes fairly and constructively, exercise self-control, and handle anger, stress, and conflict

Are these components in place in your child's school?

The Parents' Role in Youth Violence

Parents are a child's most important teacher — for better and worse. Children who become violent often have parents who:

- ▬ are cold, rejecting, and uninvolved
- ▬ are violent or aggressive toward others
- ▬ are inconsistent with discipline — sometimes permissive, sometimes punitive
- ▬ are verbally and/or physically abusive
- ▬ abuse or torment animals
- ▬ condone or promote violence

Raising Children to Resist Violence

- ♥ Give your children consistent love and attention
- ♥ Make sure your children are supervised
- ♥ Don't hit your children
- ♥ Be consistent with rules and discipline
- ♥ Try to keep your children from seeing violence at home and in the community
- ♥ Avoid violent TV programs and video games

American Academy of Pediatrics, 1999

Involved parents can prevent many problems in schools. Volunteering at school . . . can make a significant contribution to the overall school climate. The presence of parents in the classroom, the library, and the hallways subtly enhances school security.

National School Safety Council, *School Safety Update*, September 1993

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WHAT YOU CAN DO

...at home

- ✓ Be direct. Tell your children what you expect of them.
- ✓ Set limits. Teach your child there are consequences to inappropriate behavior.
- ✓ Praise your child for demonstrating responsible behavior.
- ✓ Set a good example. Model peaceful ways to solve conflicts.
- ✓ Know your child's friends and their parents.
- ✓ Help your child plan creative and constructive free-time activities.
- ✓ Ensure that firearms kept in your home aren't visible or accessible to your child.
- ✓ Watch TV and video games with your child. Talk about violence on TV, video games, and possibly in the neighborhood. Help your child understand the consequences of violence.
- ✓ Teach your children how to solve problems. Praise them when they follow through.
- ✓ Help your children find ways to show anger that do not involve verbally or physically hurting others. Be a role model in the way you handle your anger.
- ✓ Help your child accept and embrace differences in others.
- ✓ Keep lines of communication open — even when it's tough. Encourage your children to let you know what they're doing. Get to know their friends.

...at school

- ✓ Ask the principal for a copy of the school's code of conduct. Discuss the code with your child. Show your support for the rules and help your child understand the reasons for them.
- ✓ Ask your child's teacher if the school needs volunteers to help teachers supervise the school campus between classes and at lunch time, to help monitor walking routes to and from school.
- ✓ Pay attention if your child expresses concerns about friends who exhibit troubling behaviors. Discuss this information with the child's parents, the school psychologist, principal, or teacher.
- ✓ Ask your principal to explore alternatives to suspension and expulsion such as:
  - special mandatory in-school sessions providing study skills, self image, relationships, and anger management, with related mandatory sessions for parents
  - collaborative programs among schools, police departments, courts, family services agencies, and local malls involving behavior therapy, drug/alcohol education, conflict resolution and anger management, ethics, job training, jail tours, supervised community service projects such as graffiti removal, and tutoring for missed classes

... in the community

- ✓ Participate in local violence prevention groups.
- ✓ Team with the parents of your children's friends to ensure school safety.

HOW TO LEARN MORE

For a free copy of "Prevention Works, An Action and Planning Guide for Safe, Healthy Schools and Communities," write to Cindy Wakefield, Colorado Department of Education, 201 East Colfax, Denver, CO 80203, or call her at 303 866 6750.

These organizations provide information and assistance to parents and others interested in creating safe, drug-free schools:

Warning signs for violent behavior: American Academy of Pediatrics, "Raising Children to Resist Violence" http://www.aap.org/family/parents/resist.htm

Rocky Mountain Center for Health Promotion and Education 303 239 6494

Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence 303 492 1032

The Conflict Center 303 433 4983

"Helping Children Cope with Disaster," American Red Cross 303 722 7474

Colorado Psychological Association 303 692 9303

Colorado School Mediation Project (conflict-resolution and violence-prevention skills) 303 444 7671

Project PAVE (counseling for adolescent violence victims) 303 322 2382

Suicide/Depression Hotline 303 860 1200

Alternatives to Suspension: Nicky Wolman, Adams Twelve Five Star Schools 303 451 1173

Suspension Intervention Services, Lakewood Municipal Court Probation Department, David Risher 303 987 7440

Clear-Cut Goals, Reliable Measures

Colorado Shines!

★Colorado was one of six states awarded two gold stars by the National Education Goals Panel for improvement in both fourth- and eighth-grade math.

★Colorado was one of 14 states winning a gold star for world-class performance in eighth grade science achievement.

★Colorado was one of only two states earning three gold stars!

An Assessment Success Story

When just 12 percent of Bessemer Elementary (Pueblo) fourth graders met the state reading standards in 1997, the faculty sprang into action. Here's what they did:

- emphasized reading, writing, and math — all day, every day
- devoted two hours a day to literacy
- reduced class sizes
- taught to state and district standards
- gave extra help to students who were behind

In 1998, 64 percent of Bessemer fourth-graders met the standard. And in 1999,73 percent of their third-graders met the Basic Literacy Standard!

A solid foundation in reading, writing, math, and science is so important to success in life that in Colorado it's the law! The Colorado Basic Literacy Act was enacted to make sure that all children have the opportunity to become capable readers by the end of third grade.

To make sure children develop strong basic skills, Colorado schools have established standards for achievement, and a rigorous assessment program periodically evaluates how well students are meeting the standards.

Standards provide the means to link more closely what students should know and be able to do with:

- ✔ what students are taught (curriculum)
- ✔ how they're taught (instruction)
- ✔ how we measure student learning (assessment)
- ✔ how we monitor and evaluate school performance (accountability)

Standards provide a framework for identifying and staying focused on our goals, and assessments show us how to more reliably evaluate our progress in achieving them.

The Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) is a way to tell how students across the state have mastered the skills and knowledge in essential subject areas. Think of CSAP as a diagnostic tool, an X-ray of your child's performance *at a single moment in time*. To get the full picture, you need to consider the grades your child earns on class assignments, tests, and report cards.

CSAP measures what students know at specific checkpoints from third through eleventh grades. It is designed to tell us how much *each student* has actually learned — not how much a student has learned compared with other students.

The first Colorado assessment results of fourth-grade reading and writing seemed low to many people. But this was expected, both in Colorado and in other states. Why? There are several reasons:

- ✔ The test is based on tough standards. All students are expected to learn more.
- ✔ It takes time to bring teaching and curriculum in line with the higher standards.
- ✔ Standards are meant to raise the bar for student achievement — they are deliberately challenging to teachers and students alike.

Colorado's new, tough standards aren't just for the early grades. They apply to middle and high school, too. In the Denver Public Schools, for instance, ninth graders will be required to take a year of American literature, a semester of geography, and a year of biology. To graduate, all students must complete four years of language arts and two and a half years of social studies. They also need three years of math and science, including one year each of algebra and geometry; and a year of physical education.

On the next page you'll find some suggestions for helping schools use standards and assessments to bring about purposeful, continuous change. You'll also find guidelines for interpreting assessment results.

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WHAT YOU CAN DO

- ✓ Talk to your child's teacher about standards. How are standards working in the classroom? What new skills will your child need to meet the standards? Ask how you can support this effort.
- ✓ Demonstrate your commitment to high standards. Don't ask teachers to give your child unearned grades or promotions.
- ✓ Understand the meaning of statewide assessment results. The first-year results provided a baseline to establish where we started. Over the years, they will provide a fair, uniform yardstick for tracking the progress of our schools.
- ✓ Avoid using statewide results to compare school districts with one another. Each community and each school faces unique challenges. It's better — and more valid — to use the results to track year-to-year gains in your own school district.
- ✓ The best source of information about your child's progress is the teacher, who can give you the "big picture" — class assignments, test scores, and performance on projects — as well as scores on a statewide assessment.
- ✓ Ask your school secretary for the name and phone number of the person who chairs the school accountability committee. Also ask for a copy of the most recent accountability report. Find out how you can get more involved in the accountability process.

Definitions You Can Use

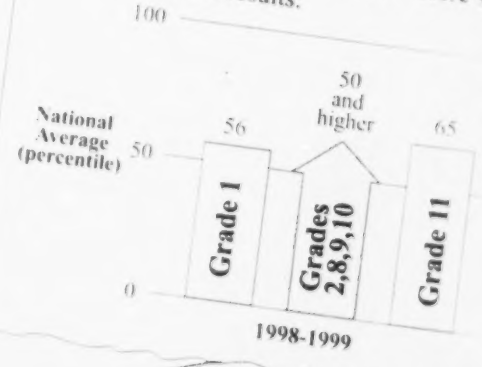
Assessment results are reported in four categories: Advanced, Proficient, Partially Proficient, and Unsatisfactory. A student who scores "Proficient" has mastered the content defined in the standards.

Some students need extra help to meet Colorado's standards. For those students, "accommodations" help level the playing field. Accommodations give all students equal access to information and learning activities — without changing the content, instructional level, or performance requirements. Accommodations include additional time to complete assignments, the use of Braille, sign language, or tape recordings, and so on.

The ITBS (Iowa Test of Basic Skills) and the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) are standardized tests administered under controlled conditions to measure student achievement. Stated simply, the ITBS measures how Colorado students compare to all other students in the country, while the CSAP measures how each individual student meets Colorado standards.

DPS Literacy Effort Yields Strong Results

Five years ago, not one grade level in the Denver Public Schools tested above the national average on the standardized Iowa Tests of Basic Skills. But for the 1998-1999 school year, six of 11 grades posted reading scores at or above the average. Here's a summary of the results:



HOW TO LEARN MORE

Free copies of the state model content standards for PreK-12 education are available through the superintendent's office in your school district, local public library, or the Colorado Department of Education's Web site http://www.cde.state.co.us/. You can also write to CDE at 201 E. Colfax, Denver CO 80203 or call 303 866 6739. CDE can also provide sample assessments in 12 academic content areas.

For information about the latest Colorado assessments, contact Don Watson at CDE ,303 866 2155, or the Denver Public Schools Standards Team, 303 764 3249.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The first edition of Recipe for Success (1995) was the final report of AGENDA 21. This second edition retains the best of the original and adds new information to help parents meet the challenges of the new century.

Additional copies are available through *Partnerships*/Goals 2000, Colorado Department of Education, 201 East Colfax Avenue, Room 501, Denver, Colorado 80203, 303-866-6739 or the Denver Public Schools, 900 Grant Street, Denver, Colorado 80203, 303-764-3249. Recipe for Success may also be downloaded from the CDE Web site at www.aclin.org/sarb/public/pdf/recipe.pdf

Recipe for Success is available in Spanish from the addresses above and on the CDE Web site at www.aclin.org/sarb/public/pdf/recipe-espanol.pdf

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